



Iowa Falls

REOPEN

Years of planning and designs came to a head last year when the Oak Street/Highway 65 bridge in Iowa Falls was closed for replacement. This Friday the new bridge will open with a community celebration and ceremonial ribbon cutting. But first, we look back at the process that led to this point and the way the bridge closure has affected the community and its businesses.

**TIMES CITIZEN
SUPPLEMENT
WEDNESDAY
NOV. 16, 2011**

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Rough road to bridge completion

BY SARA KONRAD BARANOWSKI
skonrad@iafalls.com

The effort to build a new Oak Street bridge in Iowa Falls has a long and, at times, tumultuous history.

In the mid-1990s the Iowa Department of Transportation began conversations about rehabilitating or replacing the Oak Street bridge, which carries Highway 65 over the Iowa River in Iowa Falls. Public meetings were conducted in the early 2000s and it was determined the historic bridge would need to be replaced.

The bridge was placed on the DOT's 2006 schedule, then later moved to 2007 and 2011.

Replacement plans hit a roadblock in 2005 when the city of Iowa Falls filed a lawsuit against the state of Iowa and the Iowa DOT.

At issue was city infrastructure in the riverbed beneath the bridge. The DOT contended that the expense of moving or protecting the sewer line prior to bridge construction was the city's responsibility, while the city argued that the work should be done at the DOT's expense. Bridge replacement was taken off the DOT's schedule.

The battle continued until the summer of 2007 when the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis collapsed, sending panic across the country. The Iowa DOT immediately began inspections of its bridges to determine their condition and needs for repair or replacement.

It was revealed that the bridge in Iowa Falls was one of Iowa's worst. In 2007 the state announced that the Oak Street bridge had a sufficiency rating of just 4 on a scale of 0 to 100. The rating was



ELI HAMANN/TIMES CITIZEN

Watch the Progress

Times Citizen photographer Eli Hamann has been documenting construction of the Oak Street bridge and he's compiled the photos in a slide show that chronicles the progress. Log on to www.timescitizen.com/bridge to watch it.

Side by Side

The previous Oak Street (Hwy. 65) bridge in Iowa Falls was a symbol of the community. Its replacement will surely become a new recognizable landmark of the Scenic City. Here's a look at the old and the new.

	Old Bridge	New Bridge
Completed:	1928	2011
Contractor:	Welden Brothers	Cramer & Associates Inc.
Cost:	\$51,374.98	\$12.7 million
Type:	Concrete Spandrel	Steel Arch
Length:	255 feet	288 feet
Width:	24 feet	42 feet
Lanes:	2	3

The previous Oak Street/Highway 65 bridge in Iowa Falls was showing its age after 82 years of use. The Iowa Department of Transportation began talks of replacing it as early as the 1990s, but a disagreement between the state and the city of Iowa Falls stalled progress until 2007, when a bridge collapse in Minnesota put bridge upkeep front and center.

CONTINUED P4



After 36 years with Cedar Falls Construction, the US 65 bridge in Iowa Falls is one of the last bridges Earl will be grinding and texturing. He says he is "retiring" this year. We wish him the very best.

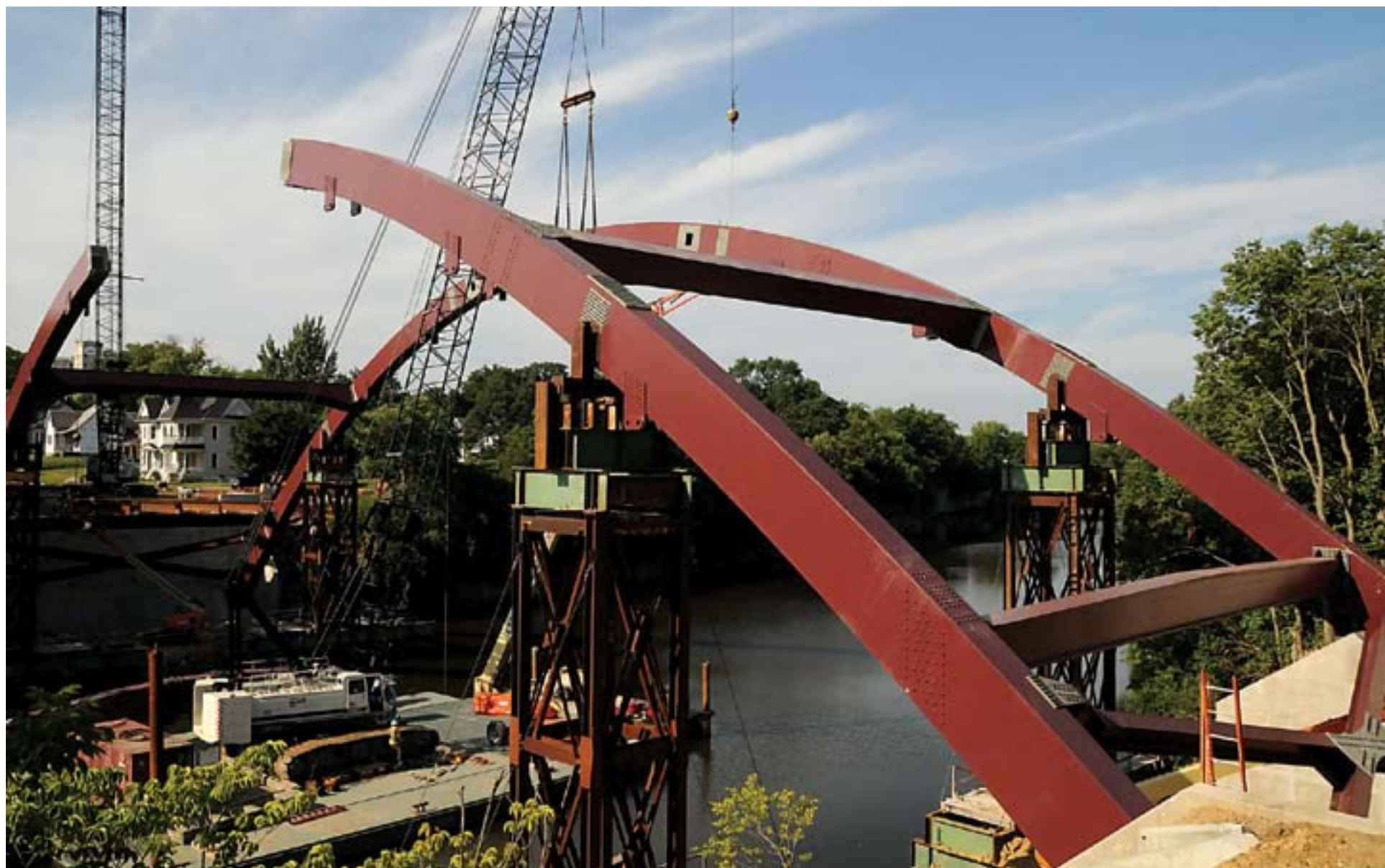
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...CONTINUED

based on the condition of the bridge's deck, the superstructure, the substructure, the operating load and the geometry of the deck. City leaders urged the DOT to replace the bridge as soon as possible. DOT officials said the earliest the bridge could be replaced would be 2012.

The battle between the city and the DOT heated back up until early 2008, when the City Council, armed with sewer line protection and replacement options, met with DOT representatives. Both entities agreed to set aside their differences — at least temporarily — in the interest of moving forward with replacement of the bridge.

The Council settled on replacement of the sewer line under the river. Work began in fall 2009 on the sewer line. It was completed by 2010 at the city's expense.

With the sewer line work done, construction could begin on the bridge.

In July 2010 the Iowa DOT awarded a contract for replacement of the bridge to Cramer & Associates Inc. of Grimes, which submitted the low bid of \$12,789,942.24.

The bridge closed on Sept. 28 last year. It will open this Friday.

The new bridge was one of several designs considered at public meetings conducted by the Iowa DOT. Whereas the previous bridge was a concrete spandrel, the new bridge is a steel arch bridge. It is longer and wider than the previous bridge, engineered to meet today's standards. According to information released by the DOT in 2009, the bridge, at that time, had an average daily traffic of 9,700 vehicles cross it. That number was expected to climb to 11,000 vehicles per day in 2011 and 15,400 vehicles per day in 2031. ■



ELI HAMANN / TIMES CITIZEN

Crews with Cramer & Associates Inc., and its subcontractors have been working since this summer to construct the new Oak Street/Highway 65 bridge. One of the final steps (above) was pouring concrete. The new bridge will be wider than the previous bridge, allowing space for a third lane and two wider sidewalks on either side of traffic. Crews have been working seven days a week to keep the project on schedule for a mid- to late November opening.

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A HISTORIC CELEBRATION

Community party planned in IF

In anticipation of the historic opening of the new Oak Street/Highway 65 bridge in Iowa Falls, a committee of business leaders, city officials and representatives from Iowa Falls Chamber/Main Street have been working for weeks to plan a community celebration this Friday, Nov. 18.

The festivities will begin at 5 p.m. at the north end of the bridge. A procession of dignitaries, members of the Iowa Falls-Alden High School marching band and local Boy Scouts will make their way from the south end of the bridge to the north.

The procession will also include two vehicles — one, a 1928 Model A (to represent the year the previous bridge was opened), and the other a 2011 vehicle, provided by Dale Howard Inc. (to represent the opening of the new bridge).

Additionally, the winners of a raffle sponsored by the Iowa Falls Lions Club will be the first “ceremonial” crossers of the bridge. There will be three winners — a walker, a bicyclist and a driver. Raffle tickets are \$2 each and can be purchased from any Lions Club member or at any area bank.

Once the procession has arrived at the north end of the bridge, members of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church By-the-Bridge will bless the bridge and lead the crowd in a prayer. The prayer will be followed by a ribbon cutting.

Following the ceremonial ribbon cutting, dignitaries in attendance will be invited to make brief speeches.

Several officials have been invited, including U.S. Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-



ELI HAMANN / TIMES CITIZEN

The new Oak Street bridge has been getting some final touches in preparation for a Nov. 18 grand opening.

Iowa) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and local legislators Rep. Annette Sweeney (R-Alden) and Sen. Steve Soddors (D-State Center). Others invited to attend include representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation, Iowa Falls Mayor Jerry Welden, the Iowa Falls City Council, the Hardin County Board of Supervisors and representatives from the construction com-

panies that worked on the bridge.

Once the speeches are finished, the community celebration will begin.

A free community meal is being made possible by Iowa Select Farms, Fareway, Hy-Vee, Heavenly's A Creative Bakery, Times Citizen Communications and several other area businesses. It will be provided on a first come, first served basis. Music will be provided by KIFG Radio.

Commemorative window clings, printed and donated by Graphics Plus, will be available in limited quantities at the celebration. The clings, which proclaim “I Crossed Over,” will be free of charge.

The celebration will end around 7 p.m.

The bridge will be opened to normal traffic at approximately 9 p.m. on Nov. 18. ■

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Local businesses ready for IF bridge to open

BY MARISSA VANWINGEN
marissa@iafalls.com

No matter where the business is located in Iowa Falls, whether downtown, by the river or just on the other side of the railroad tracks, they are ready for the bridge project to be over. It has been a 14-month ongoing process that has affected all those near it in different ways.

It may be hard to measure the dollar amount lost, but most business owners say they have noticed a drop in total revenue. Mostly coming from those out-of-town customers who either don't want to hassle with the detour, or those who no longer pass through downtown.

"I've noticed a lot less out-of-town traffic," said Jason Bolhuis, co-owner of Heavenly's A Creative Bakery. "Especially people coming back from state parks or from surrounding towns like Eldora. They don't come down this way anymore."

Now that the bridge is reopening, it is a straight shot down Highway 65 and everybody hopes those once turned off by the detour will start finding their way back.

"It's finally a safe route for people to travel to come to Iowa Falls," said Randy Husted of Camp David. "To no longer have to go over the railroads, it's going to bring in more out-of-town traffic that has been avoiding Iowa Falls for the last year because of the nuisance."

Some businesses have been affected more than others, though.



ELI HAMANN / TIMES CITIZEN

Some businesses, like Camp David, used creative marketing to remind customers that they were still open.

Tracy's Auto Center is right in the thick of things. Located on 213 Oak St., owner Tracy Houck has to deal not only with the noise and vibrations from constant jackhammering, but also all the orange tape and cones that come along with it.

"It's been a long 14 months," Houck said. "Just the congestion has been a night-

mare trying to get around. The worst is having the streets blocked off; you can't get in or out of the parking lot and all of the construction pieces in the way. But it will be nice once it gets done. It is a nice bridge, there's no doubt about it."

Tucked back on Washington is The Spoken Wheel Cyclery. Though it has been

more difficult to find, owner Tyler Duit said he has not been affected because it is a specialty store. People are going to seek out the Spoken Wheel no matter what is going on across the way, Duit said.

What Duit has noticed is people getting turned around because of the detour.

"I have gotten a few phone calls about

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Heavenly's co-owner Jason Bolhuis said he hopes business will pick up again now that the bridge is reopening.

how to get around town, but nobody has been too lost," he said.

While the Heavenly's building is right downtown, the detour affected them the most when it came to deliveries.

"There have been many times that I have had to wait for trains," Bolhuis, the one who does all the driving, said. "It will definitely cut down on delivery time."

Not all businesses have suffered. Some have benefited from bridge work.

Campbell Supply Co. saw a steady stream of business from employees of the contractor, Cramer & Associates Inc., and its subcontractors.

Company President Bob Campbell said he's grateful for the increased business the bridge construction sent Campbell Supply's way.

Some businesses have taken matters into their own hands, doing a lot more advertising to remind people they are still there, still open. Some have put ads in all the local papers, done promotions via Facebook, and there's even one going to a whole different extreme.

Camp David bought property on River Street to put up a neon sign that tells of its daily specials and important days coming up.

"I decided that is where all the traffic is, so I wanted to catch people's attention," Husted said. "Now I just have to figure out what to do with it next."

No matter the reason, money or time, everybody can agree, they are just ready for the bridge to be open. ■

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Up Close and Personal

Jones and Vest witness bridge progress

BY COREY MEINTS
mmeints@iafalls.com

Don Jones and George Vest had a unique daily routine.

Jones, owner of Jones Appliance & TV, and Vest, owner of Vest's Decor & More, would routinely take a moment (or two) to watch construction progress on the Oak Street/Highway 65 bridge. They didn't have to go far to do it, either.

Jones' business is just around the corner from the bridge that is set to open Friday. Several times a week, he said, he took the short stroll to watch the progress and talk to a few construction workers. Vest needed to only look out his window or step out his front door to witness it all.

Vest caught himself looking out his window every day. He and his son Richard took almost-daily photographs of the work for their own record. "We constantly looked out the window," Vest said. "We were so close to the project that we were almost part of the project. We couldn't leave the building without being involved with what was going on. We were as close to the project as you could get."

Jones has been in business for 29 years. In that time, he said the bridge has been the biggest project he's seen. "Nothing has split the town like this," he said. "It gives people some idea what's going to happen if they do the streetscape downtown."

Vest was actually in on the earliest stages of the bridge project since his parking lot abuts the bridge area and required special easements. So he got to know a few of the contractors and engineers quite well.

"We had to negotiate property right out here," Vest said. "So I was pretty well involved in it early when they were first thinking about doing it and getting ready



ELI HAMANN / TIMES CITIZEN

Jones Appliance & TV owner Don Jones has been a devout witness of the bridge replacement project.

to go ahead with the project."

Both Jones and Vest were impacted by the bridge closure to varying degrees. Vest had a noticeable drop in business throughout much of the project, while Jones said several factors affected his business.

Jones said it was hard telling just how the bridge closure impacted his business. He noticed a bit of a drop-off in business immediately following the closure, but once people learned how to find him from the south it picked up again. He said the bigger impact may

have actually been the downturn in the economy.

"After it closed, things slowed down," Jones said. "It took people a while to figure out how to get around. I think people hesitated, but after a while they realized it wasn't going to be open right away."

But even with the threat of lost business, Jones said he was happy to see the old bridge replaced.

"We didn't know what it was going to do to us because all we knew was that it was going to cut the town in

half," he said. "There's history with the old bridge with the life it had and all the traffic and people that went over it, but we knew it was in bad shape and something had to be done."

"The first few weeks we got a tremendous amount of traffic from people asking how to get around it," Jones added. "That was before they put the signs up. People were lost, but that was probably the first three months, and the word got out more."

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The previous Oak Street/Highway 65 bridge, opened in 1928, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its uniqueness.

A LOOK BACK

Previous bridge was unique, iconic

The previous Oak Street bridge is history - literally. The bridge, which was opened in 1928, was a concrete open spandrel arch. Its uniqueness and iconic status in Iowa Falls got it listed on the National Register of Historic Places. According to the National Register, upon construction of the bridge, the Iowa State Highway Commission described the Oak Street bridge as the “longest arch span either concrete or steel in the state of Iowa.”

The bridge was built by the Iowa Falls-based Welden Brothers Construction Company at a total cost of \$51,375. Upon announcement of the project in 1927, the Highway Commission stated, “Iowa Falls residents are fortunate in having the most beautiful and most picturesque section of the Iowa River through the heart of the town.” The banner headline used to depict the landmark was “Nature Gives Scenic Beauty Touch to New Jef-

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When it was opened, the previous Oak Street bridge was the longest arch span either concrete or steel in the state. It was built by Welden Brothers Construction in Iowa Falls at a cost of \$51,375.

fereson Highway Bridge at Iowa Falls.” Although highway commission engineers typically used riveted steel trusses for medium-span river crossings in rural settings, they used concrete open spandrel arches for a number of urban and small-town structures in the 1920s. By using open spandrel arches, ISHC could achieve a relatively long span at a reasonable cost, while

contributing aesthetically to the urban settings in which the bridges stood. According to the National Register of Historic Places, “The Iowa Falls Bridge is distinguished as a well-preserved example of this application of urban bridge design. A centerpiece for this small city, it is a local landmark and an important transportation-related resource.” ■

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Overall Jones said it’s been about as good an experience as he could have hoped. But he’s ready for it to be done. “It’s good to see it getting ready to open back up,” Jones said. “It’s been interesting to watch and the crew has done a fantastic job.” Having worked with an engineering firm himself years ago, Vest understood what it takes to build a bridge. “I knew pretty well what it would entail in time and everything else,” he said. “And as a business owner, I knew the bridge closing would decrease the amount of traffic, and it did. It’s one of those things to be expected. You can’t have progress without affecting certain people.” At times, Jones said, it felt like his building was a lot closer to the bridge than it actually is. “I remember it was a year ago this month when all of a sudden on a Saturday morning we heard this ker-thud and realized they dropped the main arch underneath it.” Vest’s business was even closer, and he has the brick siding to prove it. He anticipates needing a tuckpointing on his facade fairly soon because of the daily vibrations. “There was considerable drilling and impact hammering, and it has affected our building a little bit,” Vest said. “There’s a few bricks that need to be readjusted. There’d be times when we’d be in here and we’d feel what they were doing.” Jones said he was down at the site about every other day or so while the old bridge was being dismantled. That slowed down once the concrete was being poured for the new bridge. “With the walls up, you couldn’t see what they were doing, so I didn’t watch as much,” he said. “But once the frame started going up, I was probably down there every day.” Often, Jones said, he walked down there a couple times a day. “I’d go down there before we opened and then after we closed,” Jones said. “Sometimes at noon I’d walk out and watch because you could see more of what was happening.” Jones said it’s been fascinating to watch. Seeing the arches go up was maybe the most fascinating thing to see. “It was neat to see them piecing it together using the



TIMES CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

Local business owner George Vest has been watching and documenting the bridge construction.

two cranes,” he said. “It was amazing to see all the work it took to do that — like putting together a big erector set. It was enjoyable to watch the whole thing and it looks very nice.” Both Jones and Vest interacted with workers from time to time as well. Jones said workers were always more than willing to visit and answer questions. “I know those guys work seven days a week, but I visited with several of them when I went down there,” he said. “They were always very friendly.” “The crew needs to be complimented,” Vest said. “This is a top-notch outfit and the workers were on the job all the time. You didn’t see anybody sitting around or hiding behind a barrel. These guys really worked and project manager Richard Schoene was right on the job. It went together as good as you could expect.” Now that the bridge is about to open, Jones said it’s great. “I think people are happy to see it open and it’ll be real nice. We’re looking forward to it,” he said. “It’s really a fantastic design and the three lanes will be a real asset to town,” Vest said. “And it’s a new bridge. That old one was a toughy.” ■



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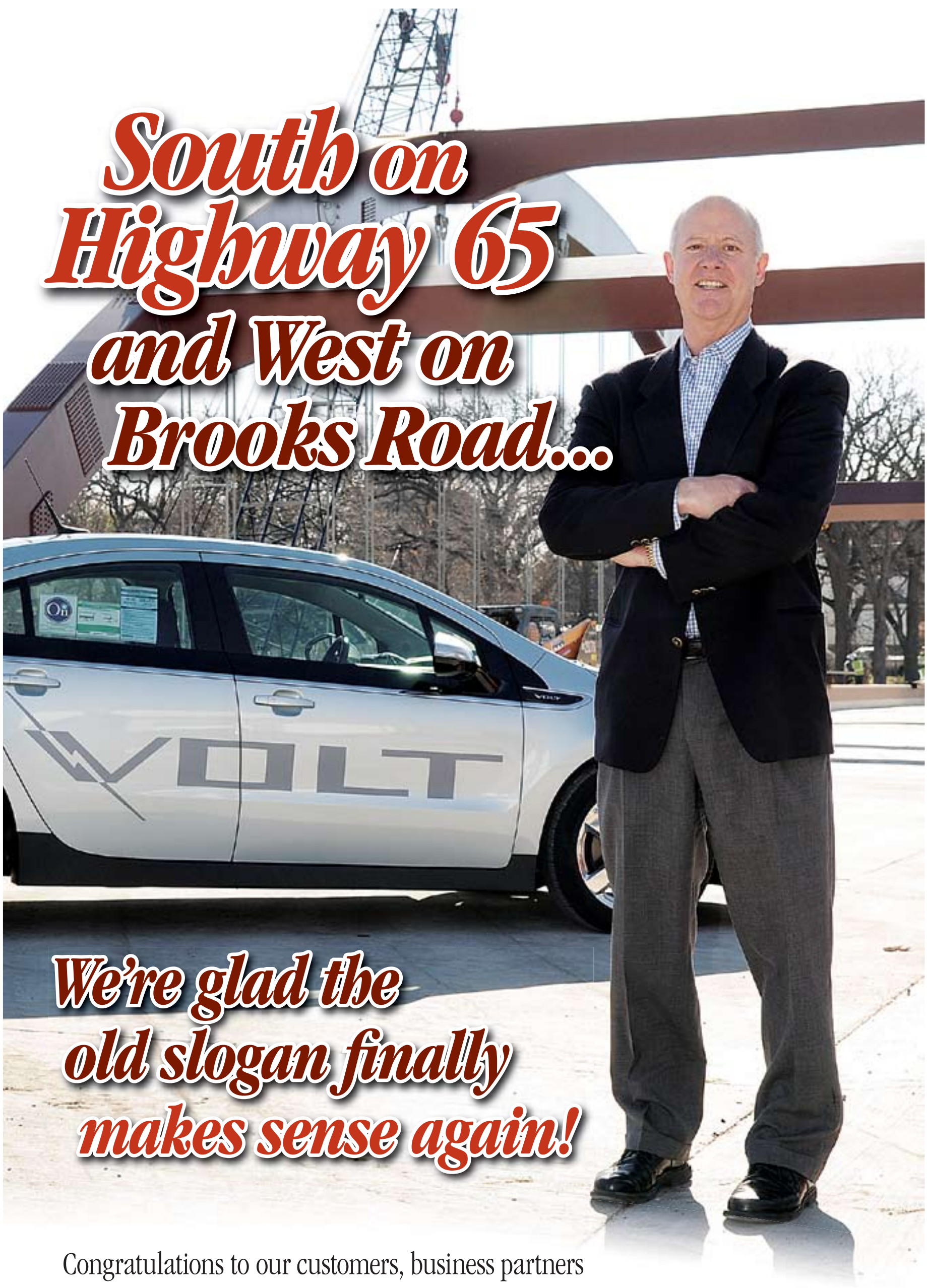
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- 2 Never drive a car that could be unsafe because of damages.
- 3 Some insurance companies may want you to visit their drive-in claims center before having your car repaired. You can do this, or you may leave your car at our shop and ask that the insurance company inspect the car here.
- 4 There is no law requiring you to obtain more than one estimate or appraisal.
- 5 You have the right to go to the repair shop of your choice. Your insurance company cannot require you to go to a particular shop.
- 6 Differences in repair estimates are common. A lower estimate may not include all necessary work. If you’re not sure why one estimate is different from another you’ve received, please ask us.
- 7 Choose a shop that has unibody repair equipment and certified (by I-CAR or ASE, for example) technicians.
- 8 Ask if the shop will be using genuine manufacturer (OEM) replacement parts.
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